

LITCHFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

EDC Regular Meeting Minutes

July 28, 2021

Bantam Annex 80 Doyle Rd. Bantam, CT 06750

Minutes (draft)

1) Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Will Neary, Chair.

Present: Regular Members: DJ Murphy, Tom Roman, Will Neary, Lindsey Turner, Christine Harding, Anne Hass, Cleve Fussenich

Alternate Members: Renée Betar and Danielle Muecke

Ex-officio: Denise Raap, First Selectwoman, Litchfield

3) Public Comment:

a. Burke Gibney: Interested resident - observing

b. Kelly Devan, Paul Devan III, Rick Plum

c. Litchfield Farmers Alliance(LFA): Jim Stedronsky, Amy Dyer, Barbara Putnam

4) LFA: Shared Introduction of "Right to farm Ordinance" Discussion occurred and the LFA asked that the EDC support the passing of this ordinance, knowing that zoning has the final say. 7:31PM Cleve: Motioned that the committee endorse the proposal from the right to ordinance

7:31PM Will: Seconded the Motion

7:31PM All in favor Unanimous

7:33PM Amy Dyer, Jim Stedronsky, Rick Plum, Paul Devan and Kelly Devan have left the meeting.

7:34PM Motion by C. Fussenich to amend draft minutes of the June 30th, 2021 regular meeting; They read 1. Litchfield was chosen by Smithsonian Magazine (digital version) as one of the best 15 small CT towns to visit, the correction is "Litchfield was chosen as one of the BEST SMALL TOWNS TO VISIT in 2021 IN THE US. L. Turner motioned to accept amended minutes, M. Murelli Seconds.

5) Updates:

a.) 7:35PM W. Neary asks the committee the best way for us to communicate?

T. Roman reminds of rules, and DO NOT REPLY ALL except Agendas and Minutes

Will asks for all Emails and Phone Numbers.

b.) M. Murelli Events: Top Dog Contest

- Feedback very positive other than make the contest longer
- Possible training for staff/restaurants on how to promote this contest
- Please send feedback to Will
- The Hot Dog Contest generated over 2,000 votes
- As a direct result of Visit Litchfield CT social posts about the Hot Dog Contest we reached over 12,000 people! Fully Organic, NO Paid advertising
- Instagram views have grown by over 200%
- Thanks to Housatonic Training Company who donated the trophy, Ideal Jewelers for engraving the trophy, Murphy Boyz for donating the printing of the table cards, BoardWalk Media and Litchfield BZ for spreading the word.

c.) Some Ideas for Events we can promote are:.

- Restaurant Week
- Made in Litchfield Event

- Rebirth of Gallery on the Green
- Litchfield Makers Market produced by Art Tripping has obtained Provisional Approval through Borough, will need to have insurance
- Date would be Saturday prior to Road Race
- February: Restaurant week, Sweetheart Specials
- Possible Open House for Bantam Arts Factory
- Black Bear is offering FREE SPACE to NON profit vendors

d.) Tourism: Tom Roman

- Exploring the Railroad Feasibility via Naugatuck Railroad company
- Tom spoke with East Litchfield Village Improvement Society (ELVIS)
- Could be costly to add a stop (currently there is no platform), 100 Foot extension 5-6 ft wide platform to get off the train could cost approximately \$4,000.
- Cleve: Platform could be shortened to reduce the cost
- Tourism passenger trains run by the New England Railroad Museum in Thomaston operate under the Heritage Trains category
- 70+ passengers can ride this train
- Current Run is from Thomaston to Torrington. Where the passengers are left for a few hours and given an itinerary of local attractions and restaurants.
- Tom proposes if a stop was added in East Litchfield we could bring tourist to Litchfield and Bantam for the day. Cleve says Railroad owns 15 ft from center of tracks and then town owns the rest. Possible Simple Platform while passengers wait for the Litchfield Bus

e.) Report from Tom Roman on Western CT Tourism board -- Storytellers (firm hired by CT Visit for "Say Yes" campaign).

- Visit CT has 12,420 (new) followers
- 111 Group was hired to handle advertising and it did not go well. Storytellers are working with the 111 group, and they are offering to help small towns with advertising

f.) Renee: Information Booth

- Things are going well, Jane Bailey responds that lots of good comments and that visitors like the information that is available.
- New Volunteer starts 7/29

g.) DJ: LABA

- Record Attendance 55 people came out to the Community Center for July meeting
- Goals are to have better representation on the internet
- Members are very well represented
- Creating new Divisions of LABA
 - 1) Eat, play, stay and shop
 - 2) Service
 - 3) Non Profit
- Looking to create a QR code for the Information Booth to drive people to www.litchfieldareabusinesassociation.com
- Next meeting is 8/17 12 pm at Wisdom House. Celebration of Past Presidents.
- Cleve mentioned the merchants association used to be a part of LABA

h.) No more Small Business Forum on Monday Mornings with Denise Raap, it is an illegal meeting according to FOI because too many EDC members were present.

- Monday Morning coffee with Denise Raap will resume, possibly topic driven open to the public in person.

i.) Christine: Merchants Association, Merchants on the Green

- Emailed local merchants on “the Green” and not one responded
- Looking for Municipal Parking Signs: Denise Raap says they have them and it is on the list to get done.
- Garbage cans on the Green: Paul Adams handles the trash. Christine will be contacting local businesses on the green about garbage can options, and who would pay for it, who would remove them at the end of day and talk with Litchfield borough to discuss.
- Jerry Geci Should be contacted as well
- Christine asked about procedure -- How do we obtain approval from the boroughs of Litchfield and Bantam to approve Parking signs?
- Start With Restaurants for garbage cans

j.) Christine:

- Danielle and Christine have agreed to work on an easy flow chart on “how to open a small business in Litchfield” to help potential new Litchfield business owners.
- What is the process
- What website to start with
- Include Realtors as a great source of important information
- Possibly add onto EDC and town website

k.) Lindsey: Future Events and Funding

- American Rescue Fund meeting and proposal process
- Must be very specific causes and needs
- The town of Litchfield was awarded two rounds of funding \$911,000 each year and the monies need to be spent by 2026 and 2027 respectively. EDC will put together a proposal for consideration by the BOS for a portion of the American Rescue Funding.
- Question by Christine: How many businesses have gone out of business in Litchfield due to Covid-19?
- Christine will send an email to Town Assessor to find that information
- Seherr-Thoss grant and current fiscal year funding that the EDC raised is only for one year, Lindsey added it will cost approximately \$20,000 to continue the tourism efforts by generating engaging and new content on the website (currently being built) and social media platforms (visitlitchfieldct). Future funding will have to be solved.

- New Business:

Tom: Food Truck Festival at Possible East Litchfield Train station

Michelle: Litchfield Arts Council 8/3 has 3 interviews

8:58 Michelle Motions to Adjourn the meeting

Anne has seconds

Next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 25, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Harding-Abbott

Secretary, Litchfield Economic Development Commission

Litchfield.